

The GTA Developers' Forum.

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**Abstract:**

**Negotiating Higher Education:**

*Building confidence for Graduate Teaching Assistants an Institutional Approach*

Negotiating Higher Education can be a difficult and daunting experience, and this is of course is no less of an issue for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) than it is for any other category of student.

Against a backdrop of neoliberalism, the forces of the market economy have led to much debate around the value, purpose and role of a university education. In the same way that those working in Higher Education must help to ensure that their 'fee-paying' students develop professional, work-related competencies during their course of study, the same opportunities to develop 'work-readiness' skills and attributes should also be afforded to GTAs.

As those working to support GTAs know only too well, securing the 'PhD' is only a very small part of the GTA story.

Adopting a workshop approach, in this presentation, we outline the issues faced by GTAs, and instigate debate relating to the dichotomy of being 'a student' whilst also being expected to exhibit expertise in their emergent role as a 'lecturer' (Irving-Bell, 2018).

Based on our research (ibid) and own experiences of working with GTAs specifically, we bring to the fore the significance that personal learning histories play in the construction of a GTAs individual identity as a learner and discuss how the adoption of supportive strategies can help GTAs to overcome feelings of anxiety, inadequacy or vulnerability, emotional responses to situations which may restrict the development of self-efficacy.

Finally, we move onto to present for analysis and open discussion the structured programme of supportive strategies we employ within our own institution, which, through a combination of formal and informal approaches is designed to help ensure that as they complete their PhD, should they wish to do so, our GTAs emerge as confident and competent teachers, ready to embark upon their career in Higher Education.